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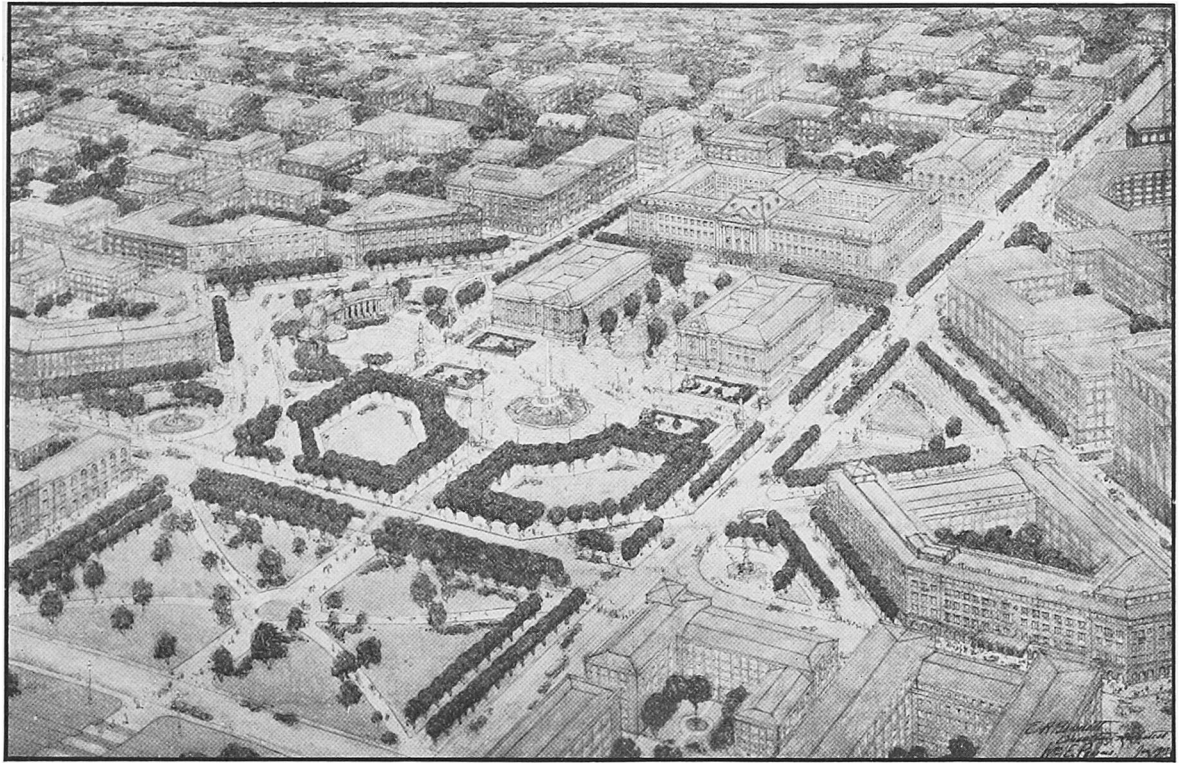
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# TOWN AND COUNTRY EMBELLISHMENT



Bird's-eye view of Denver's Civic Center as it will look when completed. The triangles on either side of the center mark the limits of the center in these directions. The Plaza in the left foreground is part of the State House grounds. The State House will overlook this Plaza.

## THE COURT OF HONOR TO CIVIC BENEFACTORS DENVER, COLORADO

BY EDGAR C. MCMECHEN

THE wholesale devastation in Europe of things beautiful points a need for the stimulation of creative genius that these abnormal ravages may be balanced. In this connection the establishment of a Court of Honor to Civic Benefactors has a deeper interest for the student of architecture than could the mere adornment of a civic center. In another sense it carries a broader lesson which may be expressed thus: to make of a city a better and more beautiful place in which to live, is to stimulate civic culture and pride, love of home and the kindly thought of one's neighbor, and that is a cardinal virtue in religion.

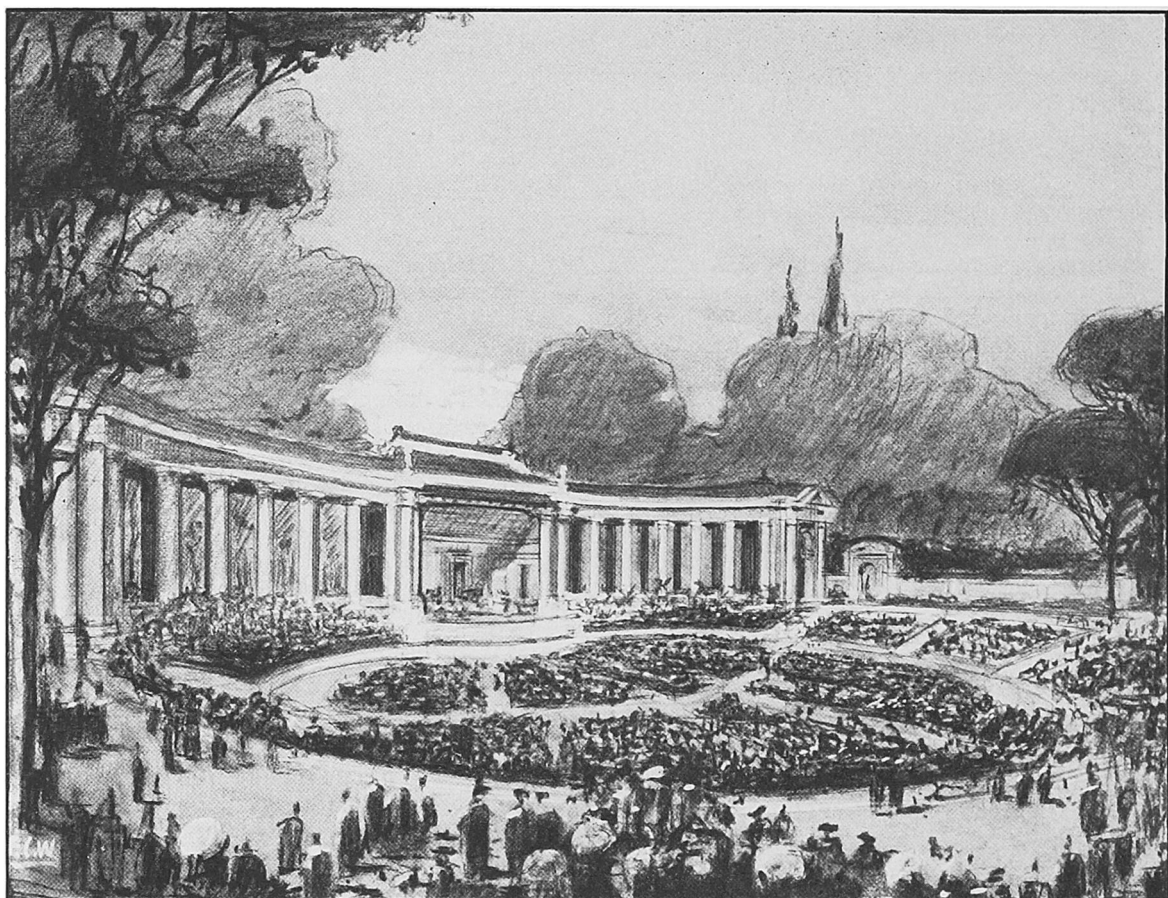
The Court of Honor to Civic Benefactors for Denver had its birth in the brain of Robert W. Speer, the Mayor, one of those rare dreamers who is equally great as a builder. It is distinguished from other commemorative works of art in that it is dedicated to all citizens, whether living or dead, who shall have enriched their city in heart interest as well as in art interest. In simple and dignified form the names of such citizens will be recorded on the forty-foot columns of a double colonnade, built on the arc of a circle and

enclosing an open-air theater. As in the Hall of Fame, a permanent board will decide what names are worthy of perpetuation there.

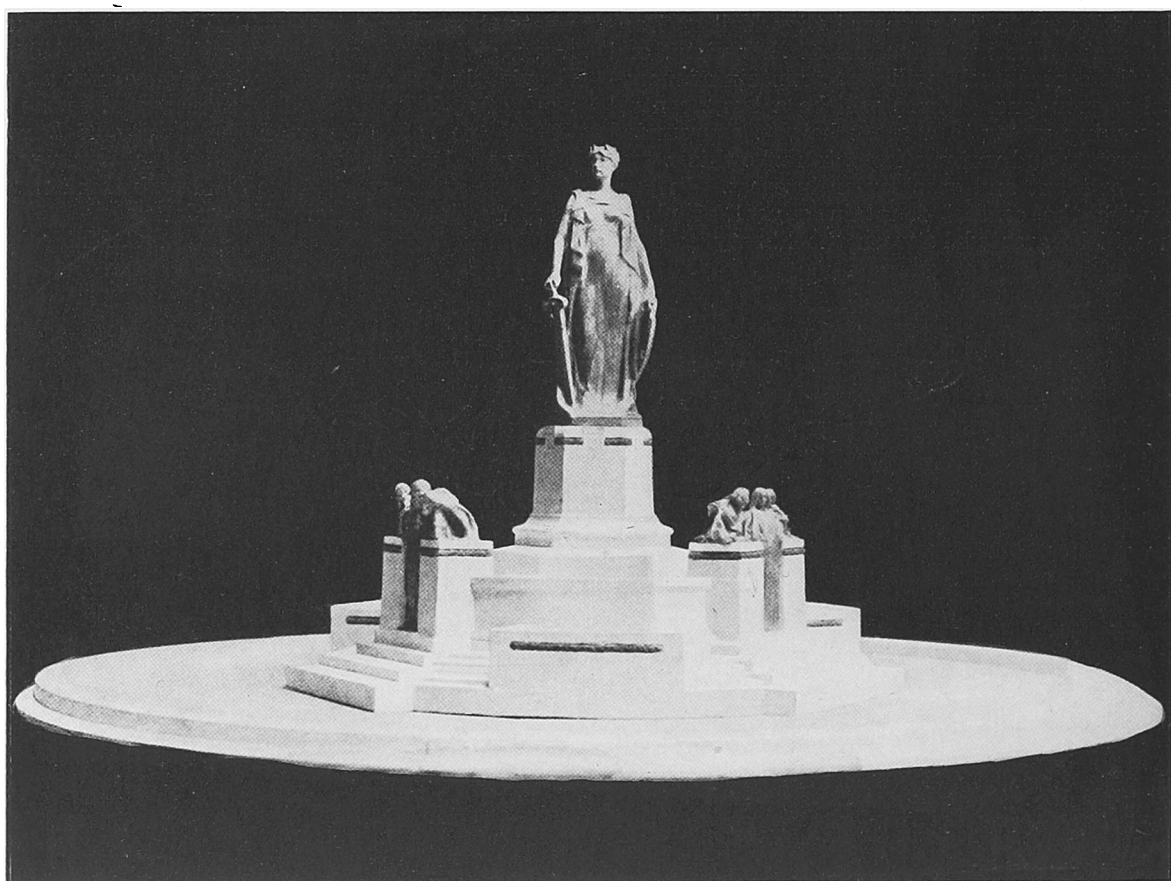
Mayor Speer is not one who sets great store upon monuments to the dead: rather he is the apostle of honor rendered to the living. His views upon this point are so interwoven with the idea of the Court of Civic Benefactors that his words may serve to make clearer its purpose:

"Future monuments will be erected to men for keeping out of war, not for leading armies in battle; for lifting burdens, not for gathering gold; for starting waves of happiness, rather than currents of selfishness and greed.

"Future monuments will be built by loving hands and thankful hearts and located where the people live—not in cemeteries. Tombs, mausoleums and shafts in cities of the dead depress, spread fear and gloom; while monumental fountains, inspiring sculpture, educational art, music, parks and playgrounds scattered among the people, spread sunshine and joy to future generations."



**DENVER'S COURT OF HONOR TO CIVIC BENEFACTORS**  
 An open-air theater and concert garden now being erected on the Civic Center



**THE STATE**  
 A monumental fountain designed by Lorado Taft and presented to Denver by J. A. Thatcher, a banker pioneer.  
 One of the first results of Mayor Speer's announcement of the Court of Honor to Civic Benefactors' plan

The consulting architect for Denver's civic center plan, Mr. E. H. Bennett, has described the Court of Honor and its surroundings in his report:

"The civic center is conceived as a large open space to be used as a place of public concourse, rather than as a secluded park. Including the diverted driveway on the south, it covers thirteen acres. It will at times of public events be the meeting-place for many thousands of people within the center itself, and in automobiles on surrounding streets. In this connection attention is called to the fact that the adjoining statehouse grounds on the east are treated as a park. A large portion of the center itself should be paved or gravelled so as to accommodate large numbers. A considerable portion of the area should be shaded, and there also should be small areas devoted to lawn and planting spaces for the shrubbery, to offer variety and background for statues, balustrades and decorative features.

"Ample space has been reserved for an art gallery, adequate for Denver's increasing needs. The library must have room for expansion. Provision is made for a future library area approximately double the size of the present building. It is proposed to take the block west of Bannock Street for the site of a new City and County building. This is designed to harmonize with the existing library and future art gallery, and thus a fine group of buildings will be created. The City Hall façade will be treated with a strong central feature of monumental architecture, which will appear to great advantage in the vista between the library and the art gallery.

"The main axis will form a vista, extending from the State House to the proposed City Hall on Bannock Street. The main feature of this vista, and also of the center itself, will be a fountain of monumental proportions. There will be a large central jet, throwing water to a great height, surrounded by minor jets and water effects, to make this a feature of brilliant and spectacular interest. In contrast with the central fountain a pool of placid water will be created between the library and art

gallery, in which will be reflected the dome of the State House, looking east, and the façade of the City Hall, looking west. The space between the flanking buildings will form a Court of Honor, to be adorned with appropriate sculpture, thus forming a sculpture garden in connection with the art gallery.

"The main axis is crossed by a transverse axis lying in the center of Acoma Street. At the north this axis becomes the main approach from the business center. At the southern end will be placed the open-air theater, including a sounding shell of the best acoustic properties for the municipal band. This shell will be flanked by colonnades extending in an arc of a circle. This feature will be the Court of Honor to Civic Benefactors.

"The floor of the open-air theater will be depressed about five feet below the general level, taking advantage of the sloping ground for permanent seats, semi-circular in plan. The colonnades will form an interesting setting for the open-air theater and will serve to screen off the view of building to the south. Dense planting of trees and shrubbery to the east will shut off street noises from Broadway.

"The center will be used at night and will be abundantly lighted. It is proposed to illumine brilliantly the central fountain. The general purpose will be to obtain ample illumination without having in any sense the glaring effects so frequent on city streets. The quality will be luminous and decorative, using both direct and indirect methods, that the center may be a vital part of the city at night as well as by day."

The inspiring effect of Mayor Speer's idea thus to do honor to the patriotic men of his city and his day can be illustrated in no better way than to relate that, within two months after his announcement, gifts were received totalling about \$400,000. Previously, during a four-year period, not a single work of architecture had been presented to the city. This is no reflection upon the loyalty of Denver's citizens. It merely accentuates the fact that, in America, while we do have ideals, we think that we have no time for their expression.

*Edgar C. McMechen*

